

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SAA-01 SES-02 PM-05 HA-05
L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 MCE-00 TRSE-00 ACDA-12
NSCE-00 AID-05 EB-08 OMB-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 SS-15
SP-02 /080 W

-----119031 171236Z /47

O 171155Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3037
SECDEF WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANA NIACT IMMEDIATE
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO USMTM/DCR RIYADH IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ4/7-SA// IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T JIDDA 6005

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA, YE, US
SUBJ: SAUDI-U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT FOR YAR

REF: (A) STATE 208508, (B) SANA 3986, (C) SANA 4053, (D) SANA 4055

1. I AM CONCERNED WITH GUIDANCE GIVEN IN REF A. I DOUBT
THAT A REPLY CAN BE ORCHESTRATED WITHIN CONSTRAINTS GIVEN
WHICH WILL BE IN ANY WAY SATISFACTORY TO SAG. ON
CONTRARY, I BELIEVE THAT RESPONSE CONSISTENT WITH
INSTRUCTIONS OF REFTEL A, NO MATTER HOW WELL PRESENTED,
WILL BE CONSIDERED A REBUFF NOT ONLY TO YAR BUT TO
SAG'S EFFORTS AND INTERESTS AS WELL.

2. I APPRECIATE THE POLICY CONCERNS AS WELL AS THE
DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN A MORE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO
SAG-YAR REQUEST. HOWEVER, REF D SAYS SUCCINCTLY WHAT
IS MY JUDGMENT AS TO OUTCOME IF REFTEL'S INSTRUCTIONS
FOLLOWED. I BELIEVE, MOREOVER, IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OUR
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PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH SAG AS WELL AS TO DETERMINE
FUTURE POLICY WITH RESPECT TO YAR, THE THREE BASIC QUESTIONS
POSED IN REF B MUST BE ADDRESSED AND ANSWERED IF AT ALL
POSSIBLE.

3. IF POLICY-MAKERS HAVE NOT YET CONSIDERED THESE QUESTIONS,
I FEEL WE NEED TO KNOW IF THEY ARE GOING TO DO SO OR IF THEY

PREFER TO POSTPONE CONSIDERATION AND DECISION (AND I RECOGNIZE THERE MAY WELL BE GOOD AND SUFFICIENT REASONS FOR LATTER COURSE).

4. AS FAR AS EMBASSY JIDDA IS CONCERNED, IT IS NOT YAR AND YAR DEFENSE PER SE THAT ARE IMPORTANT. I BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN SAUDI CREDIBILITY IN USG AND IN OUR DESIRE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THEIR NEEDS ON GUT ISSUES. SAG HAS BEEN RESPONSIVE TO OUR NEEDS ON THE GUT ISSUE OF SUFFICIENT OIL SUPPLY AT A REASONABLE PRICE. GUT ISSUE FOR THEM IS SOVIET THREAT. IN FACT, THAT WAS THE ISSUE THAT UNDERLAY THE F-15 QUESTION. WHAT THEY WANT FROM US NOW IS SOMETHING THAT LOOKS MORE LIKE A REAL POLITICAL COMMITMENT THAN A STRAIGHT COMMERCIAL SALE. THUS FAR, OUR RESPONSE TO YAR PROGRAM HAS LOOKED MORE LIKE STRAIGHT COMMERCIAL SALE, BOTH IN SIZE AND IN FINANCING. SAG IS NOT ASKING THAT WE DELIVER MASSIVE SUPPLIES OF ARMS TOMORROW, NOR THAT WE FINANCE THE ENTIRE PROGRAM. WHAT SAG WANTS IS POLITICAL COMMITMENT FROM US TO KEEP PACE WITH THE THREAT. THEY WANT TO FEEL THAT IF MORE EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED LATER ON, WE WILL BE RESPONSIVE. IN ORDER FOR U.S. POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO BE CREDIBLE, IT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL THAT WE UNDERWRITE SOME OF THE COSTS OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO YAR.

5. I WOULD PREFER WAITING UNTIL AFTER RECEIPT OF KING'S
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LETTER TO PRESIDENT TO RESPOND TO SULTAN, EVEN IF RESPONSE IS BASICALLY NEGATIVE, UNLESS POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT USG POLICY WILL BE CHANGED IN INTERIM PERIOD SO AS TO PRODUCE MORE FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM PRESIDENT TO KING THAN IS INDICATED BY PRESENT INSTRUCTIONS. IN FACT, I BELIEVE WHATEVER DECISION IS MADE SHOULD BE EMBODIED IN PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO KING'S LETTER SO AS TO BE CLEAR AT ALL LEVELS OF SAG.

6. I HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT PRINCE SULTAN HAS ASKED BG CATHEY TO COME SEE HIM ON AUGUST 18 AND GIVE HIM ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS HE RAISED WITH CATHEY ON AUGUST 12. SULTAN EXPLAINED THAT HE WOULD BE HAVING A "VISITOR" FROM YAR IN COUPLE DAYS FROM NOW. I SUSPECT THAT "VISITOR" IS SALIH AS PREDICTED IN PARA 11 OF SANA 4054. THIS POINTS UP ONCE AGAIN IMPORTANCE THAT SAG ATTACHES TO THIS QUESTION.
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